

THE

ADVOCATE

Back to School

Special Edition



THE ADVOCATE [Back To School Special]

Aug. - Sept. 2009

Why I Come To Work

by Thomas Butler, Youth Development Representative, Youth Services Center

I'm Thomas Butler and I am a Youth Development Representative at the **Youth Service Center (YSC)**. My responsibilities at YSC revolve around the intake process in which I take kids from the courts to YSC and back. I also transport youth to shelter homes and other locations. Working with the youth is different and more enjoyable than working with adults. Before DYRS, I worked at an adult correctional facility in South Carolina. Youth have different needs than adults; they require more time and conversation, and that is what I like to do. I like working with the kids and imparting any knowledge that I have to help them see things in a different light and to better themselves. It leaves a good feeling knowing that you've helped someone, and I like coming to work to help these kids as much as I can every day. [\[View video*\]](#)



Giving Back Through Community Service

by Kathy Ashe, Special Assistant



This summer, youth residents from the **New Beginnings Youth Development Center** offered free lawn service for residents of Ward 5 who are 65 years and older. Among these residents, **Ms. Eddye L. Williams**, age **109**, had her lawn landscaped by the young men. The concept of the free lawn service program came from **Carl Matthews**, DYRS Equipment Operator and Supervisor of the program. It is part of DYRS' growing effort to involve young people in giving back to society through positive activities. To read more of the story in the Washington Informer—[\[click here\]](#).

Talent Show and Award Ceremony

From Michael Jackson to a live Go-Go rendition of Beyonce's "Ego," See Forever, DYRS staff, and youth had a wonderful time collaborating in the first **Maya Angelou Academy Talent Show and Award Ceremony** at the **New Beginnings Youth Development Center**. Youth from each unit showcased their talents with a short video segment, an engaging lip-synced dance routine, a large youth/staff group line dance, and a live band. In between the acts, awards were given out to youth who improved academically, have raised their GPA, increased their effort, and much more. Congratulations to the award recipients, and great job to everyone for a show well done!



Cultural Diversity Fair

by Cecilia Jones, Program Support Assistant



Traveling the world in a single day has never been easier than with the help of youth and staff at DYRS' **New Beginnings Youth Development Center**. Within a remarkable short time, staff and youth collaborated to create unique experiences in each unit. To showcase the diversity of the world, visitors were greeted with warm welcomes, colorful costumes, samba dances, a red carpet, and a plate of sushi. The countries displayed were Japan, Brazil, Cuba, Sierra Leone, and Italy. Many thanks to the staff and youth who put together a beautiful cultural showcase!

EAP (Employee Assistance Program)

by Kris Laurenti, Special Assistant

The District government is offering an **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** benefit for employees and their dependents. The EAP provides confidential assessment, referrals, and short-term counseling for employees who need or request it. Confidentiality is assured. No information regarding the nature of the personal problem will be made available to the supervisors nor will it be included in the permanent personnel file. For more information, go to the Human Resource tab on the Intranet or [\[click here\]](#) for direct access.

Brightening the Youth Services Center



Shades of bright lemon and asparagus green colored the white washed walls of the Youth Services Center. Thanks to Wendell Cavin, Freddie Mudd, and Calvin Brown from our DYRS Facilities' team for transforming the whole facility in time for the new school year.

Congratulations to the Oak Hill Academy Class of 2009!

(June 18, 2009)

This special edition covers the wonderful accomplishments of our recent high school graduates. Every year, many DYRS youth achieve great successes, but this year's graduation was the first to recognize graduates at the former Oak Hill Youth Center, and will be the beginning of many more for the Maya Angelou Academy at the New Beginnings Youth Development Center. With the help of our staff five out of the seven graduates will be attending college this fall, and two are entering or have completed vocational programs.

We congratulate our youth for working hard on their goals and achieving incredible accomplishments!

We also would like to thank staff for all their work with our young people to make it possible!

Thank you for the great work!!

THE ADVOCATE [Back To School Special]

Aug. - Sept. 2009

Reflection by DeVierre Chappell

My Years in High School

As I come to the end of my 12th grade year I sit back and look at what I had to do to get where I'm standing. I'm proud to have people who encouraged me to continue to stick it out in school no matter how hard it was getting. I will like to specially thank Oak Hill Academy for helping me get through my senior year, and into Allegany College in Cumberland, MD which I will be attending in the fall. I worked real hard my senior year and am proud to say it was worth it. I will like to thank everyone who has supported me throughout my time in school.

Thanks,
DeVierre V. Chappell



Reflection by Anthony Dixon

Opportunities come in all ways, shapes, forms and fashions. When one gets an opportunity one should treat it as if it is their last, and try to make the best out of it. I have learned that college is my chance to continue my personal progression. It will give me the chance to show other young men who have experienced similar life situations to mine that you can progress and become a better person. I have learned that it is easy to fail, but I will have to work hard to succeed. I am making the choice to work hard, and prove to those who think I am on the wrong path that I am going to do that right thing.

At this point I want to thank my best friend Gianni for supporting me through the last 3 years of my journey. I would also like to thank David Domenici for giving me the opportunity to learn out at Oak Hill in the school and Ms. Tammy for allowing me to learn at the Transition Center.



Reflection by Broderick Forest

First I would like to thank my mother for giving birth to me and keeping me stable. Second, I would like to thank the See Forever Foundation for making this happen and all the time they have shared to get me this far ahead. At this time I would like to thank myself for overcoming the challenges in my life.

Now that I have my GED, I could look forward in life and step into the work force. I now have my HVAC certification. I am certified to fix, install, replace, and maintain air conditioning and heating units.

Thank you.

Broderick



Reflection by Decole Fields

First off, I would like to start my "thank you's" with none other than my mother, because without her I would not be here; my grandmother for being on top of me about everything...and I mean everything; my dad, for trying to help even when I didn't want his help; and the rest of my family.

This journey started off with me skipping school, cursing out teachers, running from school police, getting put out of every school I went to, etc. I thought it was all fun until I got locked up for the first time. However, I came home and went right back to skipping school and committing crimes. I went back and forth to Oak Hill several times before this last time. This time when I arrived at Oak Hill, I thought they were going to let me out, but they didn't. I was shocked. I couldn't accept that because I was so used to going in and out. They told me I had to complete the six-level program before I could go home. At first things were a little rough because I was still angry that I had to stay that long. Eventually, I started straightening out thanks to five people out at Oak Hill: Ms. Owens aka "Big Head" for nagging and nagging me all the way out of the Oak Hill gates, she still nags, even more now that I am home; Mr. Makuti aka "Lil Bill"; Ms. Kym; my man Mr. Matt; my main man Marty Mar. Also, I would like to thank Mr. Williams because without him I would be in Minnesota somewhere, away from my family, but he saw something a lot of other people could not see. So I really want to thank him for that. I want to thank the rest of Imani and See Forever staff for everything. They all helped me with the biggest objective—obtaining my GED. I hope the best for all of you and of course, thank you.

In the end, I earned my GED. I finished the six-level program. And now, I'm home trying to get into a vocational program for carpentry.

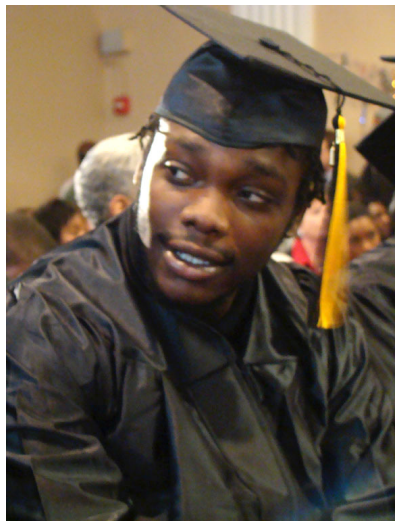


Reflection by Roland Stewart

Today I get a chance to celebrate one of my greatest achievements. I can finally say I successfully earned my GED. I felt as though I was getting too old for high school — plus I kept getting suspended. So when I went down to The Hill, I said I might as well get it out of the way.

I would like to thank some of the Oak Hill staff that kept me motivated. First is Mr. O, for sharpening my math skills a little bit. Next, I want to thank my man Maurice for keeping it 100% with me. Also, thanks to my man Bobby for taking me on college tours. I would like to thank all my teachers for taking the time to help me better my future and anyone else who I did not mention, you know the business.

Now, I am currently trying to get into Delaware State University for Business Management. I'm trying to come back with a fat bank account. I feel as though God's got my back, so I ain't gonna front.



THE ADVOCATE [Back To School Special]

Aug. - Sept. 2009

Reflection by Jahmar Thaxter

I would like to thank my family who stood by me throughout this whole school year. I worked real hard to complete my class assignments, and pass my quizzes and tests with flying colors. I would like to thank the Oak Hill transition center for keeping faith in me and helping me with everything I needed.

As I come to the end of the school year I'm happy to say that I have the chance to excel my education, at the moment I am debating with Morgan State and Xavier University.

I never thought I would make it this far, but with the help of my family and Oak Hill, I finally made it out of high school.

Thanks,
Jahmar



Reflection by Larry Williams

There is good and bad in every thing, but it is up to us to decide if we want to live a positive life or a negative one. Around eleven or twelve I thought I could live a double life but it was too much for me. So, I decided to go all out and that led to me catching my first charge at thirteen. Because of the severity of the charge and because I was still trying to live a double life, I was in and out of facilities from 13 to 17.

My life started changing when I was released from Oak Hill. I say that because my advocate set me up with a job, I got my GED not too long after that, and after a year of being told what to do, I was finally free. Having these things enabled me to go to college and leave the negative behind.

However, it still wasn't good enough. I found that I was still trying to live two lives, and a couple of months later I caught a drug charge. That is when my eyes opened for real because I thought all my hard work was going to go down the drain. I was released and from that day forward, I made the decision to live positively.

I got accepted to college not too long after and I knew that going would be in my way to start this new chapter of my life off right.



Thank You To All Staff

Year after year, DYRS staff work diligently to prepare youth in our care to return to their communities and to an imperfect world. We often hear more about young people doing wrong and going bad than how resilient and successful they are in their lives. To all our DYRS staff, our partners, the See Forever Foundation, and DCPS — Thank you! Your work doesn't go unappreciated and won't go un-acknowledged.

In every issue of The Advocate, we always profile a staff member who shares with us why they like coming to work. Each profile describes what they do for a living. It also tells us about their responsibilities and how their work isn't for the faint of heart. For the 576 staff who haven't been profiled or mentioned yet, your work does not go unnoticed. Your efforts are critical to having positive outcomes for the youth and families we serve and the communities in which they live.

With every successful youth, we hope that it means one less youth ever having contact with the juvenile justice system again. Although it may be too wishful to think that one can completely eliminate recidivism, it is the agency's goal to reduce the number of repeat offenders coming in contact with the juvenile justice system, or even worse, headed towards the adult correctional system.

Our mission is to improve public safety and give court-involved youth the opportunity to become more productive citizens by building on the strengths of youth and their families in the least restrictive, most homelike environment consistent with public safety. In addition, DYRS is quickly moving towards providing the nation's best continuum of care for court-involved youth and their families through a wide range of programs that emphasize individual strengths, personal accountability, public safety, skill development, family involvement, and community support.

DYRS staff is vital in achieving the agency's mission and vision. With several new programs ahead, we are developing and are in the midst of implementing programs to build on the strengths of our employees to better support our youth and their families. We have announced a 'Positive Education' program to help staff gain or complete their college degree. We also piloted a special training program with the Holocaust Museum on professional and personal accountability in knowing the ethics, power, and responsibility that comes with working in the juvenile justice field. By providing resources and equipping you, our staff, with the right tools, we hope to empower you to assist and, in turn, empower the youth that you work with on a regular basis. We also are working with our community partners to create our Lead Entities and Service Coalitions where staff will work more frequently in the field to better help the families and the youth that we serve.

Thank you for working hard to change the lives of committed and detained DYRS youth. Although we have made great progress through our reform efforts, we are not there yet. Change has been difficult, yet with time, effort and your hard work it has greatly improved the state of the agency and the outcomes we are achieving. Continue with the great job and let's keep working towards building better DC communities for our young people and their families by supporting them as best we can.

Thank you!

Director Vincent Schiraldi



Youth Recognition Ceremony

Every year, DYRS adjudicated youth are honored for being enrolled in college, graduating from high school, holding a steady job, or achieving personal success. DYRS recognizes the hard work of its youth and their positive accomplishments while in the community, and our staff for making this all possible! Even though these youth have been in contact with the juvenile justice system, their resiliency has chartered them to a new path in life. Join us in congratulating the many youth, who were not mentioned in this publication due to the sheer number of successes, at the annual 2009 Youth Recognition Ceremony. Details will be sent via email in late September.



Government of the District of Columbia